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CIVIL DISTURBANCES MAY OCCUR IN BOLIVIA

Student opposition groups reportedly are planning a large-scale demonstration in La Paz on the afternoon of 30 July, presumably as a protest against the disappearance of two students believed "to have met foul play" at the hands of the government. The government is trying to dissuade the students from carrying out their plan, and intends to take drastic measures if necessary.

Bolivian student groups are very influential politically. They started the successful 1946 revolution and were a center of agitation for the 1952 revolution which brought the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) to power. Though the majority of the students still support the MNR, Communist influence is strong in the organized student groups.

Meanwhile, the MNR government is about to face an equal or more severe test on 2 August when it promulgates its long-awaited agrarian reform decree. The decree will reportedly call for a long-term orderly process of reform with compensation for expropriated lands. The powerful Bolivian Labor Confederation, however, has demanded land nationalization without compensation and organization of the Indians into collectives to work the landed estates. If the agrarian syndicates, some of which are led by Communists, follow the labor confederation's line rather than the milder government proposals, serious civil disturbances may result.

There have been sporadic Indian uprisings in rural Bolivia during the past six months. In late June, agrarian laborers, led by professional agitators, overran and looted the property of many landowners. There were also a few deaths. At present an atmosphere of armed vigilance ~~now~~ prevails both among the landholders and the agrarian laborers.

The controversial agrarian reform decree also threatens to split the MNR itself, since the party's right wing includes landholders bitterly opposed to the decree.

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